

**DENTISTS/DENTAL BODIES CORPORATE
NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE
GENERAL DENTAL SERVICES**

COVID-19 – BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT MEASURES

1. This Memorandum provides information and guidance to independent contractors, (dentists and dental bodies corporate) providing NHS General Dental Services (GDS) on the steps to take during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Contingency Planning for NHS General Dental Services

2. Contingency measures have been put in place to preserve the integrity of GDS as a result of substantial disruption to service provision due to the escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak in Scotland.

Monitoring During COVID-19

3. All independent dental practices providing GDS are required to complete a Business Continuity Plan (your NHS Board will have provided a template for this) to provide baseline data now that we have entered the delay phase of COVID-19. This should be completed by a lead dentist who has the authority to submit this on behalf of the practice. Plans should be submitted to your NHS Boards by 31 March 2020. Thereafter practices are required to submit a weekly NHS activity record sheet (your NHS Board will have provided a template for this) to their NHS Board.

Financial Support

4. Financial support measures will be put in place with immediate effect for independent contractors providing GDS as a result of substantial disruption to service provision due to the escalation of the COVID-19 outbreak in Scotland. This recognises that delivery of GDS within a practice will be compromised due to staff shortages, or patients not attending for routine treatment, or a combination of both, and that as a result the practice may no longer be financially sustainable.

5. Practitioner Services have been instructed to put in place the following financial support measures with immediate effect for all independent practices providing GDS.

Item of Service

- a top-up payment that will ensure that a dentist receives item of service payments equal to 90 per cent of their average monthly item of service income (net of patient charges for fee paying patients) for the period 2019/20. Any dentist on maternity or sick leave at the time the financial support measures are put in place will not be entitled to a top up payment.

NHS Commitment Status

- protection of NHS commitment status. This means that a practice with reduced income will not lose 'full' or 'partial' NHS commitment status.

Allowance Payments

- protection of General Dental Practice Allowance, rent reimbursement and commitment payments at the March 2020 schedule.

Continuing Care and Capitation Payments

- these payments are not affected and will continue as normal.

Condition of Entitlement

6. It is a condition of financial support, that where a practice closes, dentists and other staff should assist the wider NHS, including the PDS, when asked by the NHS Board – see paragraphs 10 and 11 below.

Exiting from Financial Support

7. Practices are required to continue to submit the weekly NHS activity record sheet throughout the financial support period – this will allow the NHS Board to determine when financial support should stop.

Staff Shortages

8. Staff absences due to COVID-19 may have a considerable impact on the delivery of GDS. Practices because of staff shortages or a practice closure may be unable to see some or all patients that require treatment. Practices should consider working with other practices in the area to maintain service delivery. Practices may already have arrangements where neighbouring practices agree to cover holidays or have emergency rotas in place.

- practices should confirm any existing arrangements to cover this contingency with each other; or
- where no arrangements exist discuss with neighbouring practices the setting up of contingency arrangements.

9. Where this is not possible patients should be directed to a PDS clinic in the event they require urgent or emergency treatment. NHS Boards will advise practices of the arrangements being put in place.

10. In the event of a practice closure due to staff absences dentists and staff may be asked by their NHS Board to assist the PDS or undertake other 'non-dental' tasks to assist the wider NHS.

11. In these circumstances dentists and their staff would be regarded as being engaged by the NHS Board to provide services on its behalf, and would be covered by the Clinical Negligence and Other Risks Indemnity Scheme.

GP17PR and GP17(O)PR – Patient Signature

12. The requirement for a patient to sign a GP17PR or GP17(O)PR is suspended during the current COVID-19 outbreak. This is to avoid multiple patients using the same pen or tablet within the practice. An update will be provided to advise when this temporary suspension comes to an end.

Updates

13. This information and guidance will be updated as and when required.

Clinical Advice

14. Clinical advice can be found on Health Protection Scotland's COVID-19 webpage at:

<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-advice-for-dental-teams/>.

Enquiries

15. Any enquiries arising from this Memorandum should be taken up with your NHS Board.

Scottish Government Population Health Directorate
17 March 2020